

STAT

Page Denied

REFERENCE REPORT ON SLAVE LABOR AND MINES AT VORKUTA

Hamburger Abendblatt
Hamburg, 12 Jan 1954

The railroad from Moscow to the northeast is a little over 1,000 kilometers in the tundra, near the Arctic, about 60 kilometers from the northernmost source of the Ural mountains. This is the Soviet Union's newest industrial region, Vorkuta.

About 15 years ago, this region was practically uninhabited, when Soviet geologists discovered extensive deposits of high-grade anthracite and bituminous coal of medium quality.

The first workers brought to the site were members of the Polish intelligentsia in 1933. Today, the miners are of Poles, Germans, Letts, Frenchmen, Hungarians, and, of course, thousands of Russians. Representatives there are made up of about 20 nations, but there are approximately 250,000 to 400,000 people. The non-Russian slave laborers are not so far as their next of kin are concerned. They say neither Soviet nor receive any mail at all.

Winter lasts 9 months, with temperatures of 50 degrees below zero (centigrade); even lower temperatures are possible.

The city of Vorkuta is growing rapidly. In 1945 it had about 5,000 inhabitants; today it numbers about 100,000. Most of the buildings are wood, and horse-drawn vehicles are the chief means of transportation.

The city is connected with the approximately 65 mines of the region by railroad spurs. Production is increasing enormously. In some of the cold, wet mines, the Soviets have started production contests and achieved outputs of 5,000 tons per shift. The mines operate 3 shifts per day. The miners' food is plentiful: sunflower seeds, potatoes, and fish soup. References report that the food would be adequate for the Russians, but that the non-Russian workers get sick.

According to Soviet plans, the Vorkuta region (about 50 x 30 kilometers) is to become a self-sufficient industrial region, a second Donbass. Quarries supply material for roads, and concrete factories are being built. It is believed that there are iron-ore deposits in the region.

References declare frankly that the Soviets have made astounding accomplishments at Vorkuta, not only because they drive the workers to the utmost, but also because they are very ingenious. Construction work continues even during the most severe cold waves. The wooden forms into which the cement is poured from the cement mixers contain iron bars. The cooling process would normally burst the forms, but the iron bars are charged with electric current which slows down the cooling sufficiently to prevent the forms from bursting. In this manner, new houses are built at 50 degrees below zero centigrade in the Arctic nights under floodlights.

The one thing which the Soviets have not been able to accomplish is the growing of edible plants. References claim that they were unable to grow anything except radishes and that everybody at Vorkuta would irrevocably starve to death if the rail link to the south were broken.

- END -

- 1 -

STAT